

Goshen celebrates commitment to affordable housing

BY RUTH EPSTEIN Republican-American October 20, 2022

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An audience of affordable housing advocates, state officials and local legislators gather Tuesday at the Litchfield County Housing Affordability Summit kickoff in Goshen. Ruth Epstein Republican-American

GOSHEN — With the need for affordable housing a top priority in most Northwest Corner towns, efforts to help in that cause were celebrated at the Litchfield County Housing Affordability Summit kickoff Tuesday.

Housing committee members, local legislators, and state and town officials gathered outside the offices of Northwest Hills Council of Government to applaud the commitment by certain individuals and hear about programs that will help expand that housing stock.

The event was led by Jocelyn Ayer of Litchfield Center for Housing Opportunity. She spoke of the urgent challenge to create and preserve affordable housing in the county.

Chris Sanders of Goshen Housing Trust talked about the Village Marketplace housing project that literally surrounded the audience. Fifty years ago, 18 apartments were created in the town's business center. Over the years, they degraded, but a year-and-a-half ago, the trust acquired the buildings and 26 acres.



Selia Mosquera-Bruno, commissioner of the state Department of Housing, addresses the audience during the Litchfield County Housing Affordability Summit in Goshen. Ruth Epstein Republican-American

"Our aim is to renovate all 18 (units)," Sanders said. "Fifty years ago, these were basically the only rental units in Goshen. They still are."

Tours of one of the renovated apartments were part of Tuesday's program.

Selia Mosquera-Bruno, state housing commissioner, said volunteers are important in increasing affordable housing options, "but they can only do so much if there is no funding. What if I give you \$500,000, with \$300,000 for asset building?" she asked with a smile. "On behalf of Gov. (Ned) Lamont, we're going to help you keep doing apartments that are friendly and energy efficient."

Nandini Natarajan, CEO of Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, said that agency has helped with the completion of more than 7,000 units in the state and another 7,000 are in the pipeline. But she also noted the obstacles in Litchfield County are unique. The population is generally older, homes sell faster and above the asking price, and the area lags in household creations.

Jennifer Kronholm Clark recounted her family's quest to find affordable housing. She and her husband both work locally and are involved in civic activities, and their two daughters attend Salisbury Central School. She said they took advantage of programs to allow them to find affordable housing.

"Affordable housing strengthens a community. Our towns won't survive without it," she said, drawing applause.



Jocelyn Ayer of the Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity presents Jim Dresser of Salisbury with a YIMBY Award for his contributions to affordable housing in his town during the Housing Affordability Summit kickoff in Goshen. Ruth Epstein Republican-American

Nancy Heaton, director of the Foundation for Community Health, said that organization has added affordable housing to its mission.

Three awards were presented during the evening. Jim Dresser was given the YIMBY Award for donating 5 acres in his Salisbury yard for an 18- to 20-unit affordable housing complex.

Anne Kremer, who has led the Salisbury Housing Committee for 10 years in helping to create some of the 39 units and another 10 that are approved, was given a lifetime achievement award.

Virginia Bush-Suttman also received a lifetime award for heading Kent Affordable Housing for 15 years and overseeing construction of three apartment houses at Stuart Farm.

Each of the winners received a replica of a tiny, lit-up house.